

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

230850Z Feb 01

2001HOCHI00183 - UNCLASSIFIED

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ACTION EAP-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	AMAD-00	CIAE-00	DOEE-00	SRPP-00
	DS-00	EB-00	FBIE-00	UTED-00	VC-00	H-01	TEDE-00
	INR-00	IO-00	L-00	VCE-00	AC-01	NSAE-00	OMB-01
	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00	SP-00
	TEST-00	USIE-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00	PRM-01	DRL-02	G-00
	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/007W				

-----C94E09 230900Z /38

FM AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH CITY
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4649
INFO AMEMBASSY HANOI
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMEMBASSY BEIJING
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
ASEAN COLLECTIVE
USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI
JICPAC HONOLULU HI
SECDEF WASHDC
DIA WASHDC
NSC WASHDC
DEPTTREAS WASHDC
USDOC WASHDC

UNCLAS HO CHI MINH CITY 000183

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/BCLTV AND EAP/PD/JMARTIN
STATE ALSO FOR PRM

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STATE ALSO FOR DRL
HANOI ALSO FOR USAID/RASMUSSEN
CINCPAC FOR FPA
SECDEF FOR ISA/EA/LSTERN
DEPTTREAS FOR AJEWELL
NSC FOR GENE CHRISTY
USDOC FOR 4431/MAC/AP/OKSA/HPPHO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [VM](#)

SUBJECT: PROVINCIAL ADVENTURES

1. (U): POLOFF RECENTLY TRAVELED TO LONG AN PROVINCE JUST SOUTH OF HO CHI MINH CITY ON THE LAST LEG OF A TRIP THROUGH THE MEKONG DELTA. HE CHECKED INTO A NEW PRIVATELY OWNED HOTEL RATHER THAN THE GOVERNMENT-OWNED GUESTHOUSE. AFTER DINNER WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PROVINCIAL PEOPLE'S COMMITTEE (WHICH POLOFF PAID FOR), HE RETURNED TO THE HOTEL TO RETIRE FOR THE NIGHT. WITH PROFUSE APOLOGIES, THE HOTEL PROPRIETOR INFORMED HIM THAT HE COULD NOT STAY AT THE HOTEL. THE LOCAL POLICE HAD TOLD HER THAT AS POLOFF WAS THE GUEST OF THE PEOPLE'S COMMITTEE, HE HAD TO STAY AT THE GOVERNMENT GUESTHOUSE UNLESS HE HAD SPECIFIC PERMISSION FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMITTEE TO STAY ELSEWHERE. THIS, ACCORDING TO THE POLICE, WAS FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE DIPLOMAT.

3. (U) POLOFF REFUSED TO CALL THE PEOPLE'S COMMITTEE TO ASK PERMISSION TO STAY AT A PRIVATE HOTEL AND REMOVED HIS LUGGAGE FROM THE ROOM HE HAD ALREADY CHECKED INTO. BUT HE ALSO REFUSED TO CHECK INTO THE GOVERNMENT GUESTHOUSE.

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ALTHOUGH IT WAS ALREADY AFTER 10:00 P.M., HE CONSIDERED GOING ON TO HO CHI MINH CITY (ABOUT AN HOUR'S DRIVE AWAY). IN THE END, HOWEVER, HE FOUND A SMALL PRIVATELY OWNED GUESTHOUSE IN BEN LUC VILLAGE STILL IN LONG AN PROVINCE WHERE HE SPENT THE NIGHT. THE GUESTHOUSE WAS SINGULARLY LACKING IN AMENITIES, BUT IT WAS WORTH STAYING THERE JUST TO PROVE A POINT.

4. (U) NEXT MORNING, POLOFF WENT TO SEE A SCHOOL BUILDING NEARBY THAT HAD BEEN BUILT BY THE U.S. ARMY 46TH ENGINEERING BATTALION IN 1968. WHILE POLOFF WAS TAKING PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE BUILDING, A LONG AN POLICEMAN ARRIVED AND INFORMED HIM THAT TAKING PICTURES OF "SENSITIVE INSTALLATIONS" WAS PROHIBITED. POLOFF RETORTED THAT THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME HE HAD HEARD AN OLD SCHOOLHOUSE REFERRED TO AS A SENSITIVE INSTALLATION, BUT SINCE HE HAD ALREADY TAKEN ALL THE PHOTOS HE NEEDED HE PUT THE CAMERA

AWAY. ON THE WAY TO THE MAIN ROAD, HOWEVER, POLOFF STOPPED THE CAR IN FRONT OF ANOTHER, NEWER SCHOOL AND SNAPPED A FEW MORE PICTURES, AGAIN JUST TO PROVE A POINT. BECAUSE OF THE LONG ARM OF THE LAW IN LONG AN IT WILL BE A LONG TIME BEFORE THE PROVINCE SEES ANOTHER CONGEN VISITOR.

AND AN UNSCHEDULED MEETING IN VINH LONG PROVINCE

15. (U) POLOFF HAD SEVERAL MEETINGS WITH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS IN VINH LONG PROVINCE DURING HIS VISIT TO THE MEKONG DELTA. WHILE IN THE PROVINCE, POLOFF NOTICED IN A TOURIST BOOK THAT THE MAIN PAGODA OF VIETNAM'S MENDICANT BUDDHIST SECT (THE MONKS WHO GO AROUND BEGGING FOR ALMS)
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WAS LOCATED IN VINH LONG TOWN. WHEN POLOFF MENTIONED TO HIS PROVINCIAL PEOPLE'S COMMITTEE HOSTS THAT HE WOULD LIKE TO STOP BY THE PAGODA DURING A BREAK IN THE SCHEDULE, THEY SAID THE HEAD MONK WAS BUSY AND WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO MEET. WHEN POLOFF SUGGESTED HE JUST WANTED TO GO AS A TOURIST, HIS HOSTS PROTESTED, "BUT THIS WAS NOT ON YOUR PROPOSED ITINERARY." NEXT DAY, AFTER THE OFFICIAL MEETINGS HAD CONCLUDED, POLOFF WENT TO THE PAGODA ANYWAY. THE HEAD MONK THERE WAS ONLY TOO HAPPY TO MEET WITH HIM.

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